

Remarks/Arguments:

This is a reply to the office action of June 3, 2004, in which the Examiner maintained that the claimed invention lacks novelty over the disclosures of U.S. Pat. No. 6311892 (O'Callaghan *et al.*).

In response to the Examiner's objection, claims 1 and 2 are being cancelled and replaced by new claims 3 to 9.

It is submitted that new claims 3 and 8 clearly distinguish the present invention from the disclosures of O'Callaghan *et al.*

Claim 3 defines a method which comprises the steps of scanning along a band on a mail piece to detect for a sequence of transitions between areas of light and dark reflectance within the band, and generating an indication of a presence of an imprint of a postal indicium on detection of a transition succeeding a predetermined number of initial transitions at the start of the sequence of transitions.

Claim 8 defines the counterpart apparatus for imprinting postal indicia on mail pieces, and comprises a first sensor for detecting the sequence of transitions, and means operative to generate the indication of a presence of an imprint of a postal indicium on detecting a signal corresponding to a transition occurring after a predetermined number of transitions.

O'Callaghan *et al.* makes no disclosure or suggestion of the method or apparatus as now claimed.

The system of O'Callaghan *et al.* includes a printer (104) for printing identification information on each mail piece, and a camera (105) for, *inter alia*, verifying a barcode.

However, contrary to the claimed invention, the camera (105) is operative to scan a barcode prior to operation of the printer (104). See, for example, column 4, lines 36 and 37.

There is no suggestion whatsoever of a system which imprints a mail piece with a postal indicium, and subsequently scans that mail piece to generate an indication of a presence of the imprint, as required by the claimed invention.

Furthermore, there is certainly no suggestion of the generation of an indication of a presence of an imprint of a postal indicium on detecting a transition following a predetermined number of transitions, as required by the claimed invention.

It is also noted that the system includes a barcode scanner (205), but the scanner (205) scans information on the trays which contain the mail pieces, and not the mail pieces as required by the claimed invention.

Accordingly, it is submitted that the claimed invention is patentably distinguished over the disclosures of O'Callaghan *et al.*

A petition for an extension of time accompanies this paper.

Respectfully submitted,

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I certify that this paper is being transmitted to the PTO on December 3, 2004 by facsimile to (703) 305-7687.

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